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14 March 1964

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CENTRAL

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BULLETIN

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* South Vietnam - Laos: General Khanh apparently hopes to extend limited military operations into southern Laos.

He envisages progressively more ambitious actions, starting with reconnaissance patrols by small units. Tribal groups living on both sides of the border would be recruited for these operations. Khanh believes that he could eventually support a force for use in Laos equivalent to a division without detracting from operational requirements within South Vietnam.

Khanh also says he intends to have South Vietnamese forces engage in hot pursuit of the Viet Cong up to a distance of ten kilometers inside Laos. He notes that an agreement for this was made several years ago with Lao army commander General Phoumi.

Khanh plans to meet with General Phoumi in Da-lat, northeast of Saigon, today. He claims Lao Premier Souvanna agreed to the meeting, but Khanh was not sure of Souvanna's position on South Vietnamese operations in southern Laos.

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Libya: The Libyan Government now intends to terminate the Western base agreements within three years.

Premier Muntassir has told the British ambassador this would be the best solution. He added that the government's 9 March statement that it was entering into negotiations on the future of the US and UK bases probably would not allay pressure for more drastic action.

[In similar comments to the US ambassador, King Idris has stressed that the Libyan regime is fighting for its life against Egyptian-generated pressure. He added that the Fikini government, which he dismissed in January, had been prepared to abrogate the agreements and demand the immediate removal of the bases.]

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Although the King and Muntassir now appear to believe that both American and British bases in the country must be removed, they apparently hope to retain the British treaty guaranteeing protection of Libya. In addition, the Libyans may be willing to allow the British limited use of their airfield near Tobruk after the majority of the forces now stationed there have left the country.

The apprehension of the King and Muntassir appears to be genuine, but they may be magnifying the extent of opposition pressure on the base issue.

Prior to Nasir's 22 February speech attacking the bases, the problem did not appear to be a major pre-occupation of Libyan domestic politics.

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NOTES

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Congo (Brazzaville): Moderate President Massamba-Debat is under increasing pressure from leftist elements in the regime. Prominent leftists now are reportedly calling for a government shake-up, with some insisting that Massamba must go. Demonstrations by tribal followers of deposed President Youlou strengthened the leftists' position last month. Since then they have forced recognition of Communist China and shaken the government by strong criticism in the legislature, which they dominate.

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